

# HEATH RURAL FIRE DISTRICT

Elton Owens, Fire Chief

PO Box 128  
Lewistown, MT 59457  
January 18, 2007

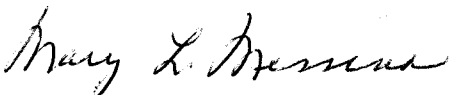
Mr. Jack Wells, Chairman  
Joint Appropriations Sub Committee on Education  
Montana Legislature  
Helena, Montana

Dear Mr. Wells:

Heath Rural Fire District is a rural, all volunteer fire district located 12 miles southeast of Lewistown. Like most small, volunteer fire districts we have struggled since our creation in 1986 with attracting volunteers and getting them adequately trained. Until a year ago, we generally had two or three trained people show up at a fire. Last April we were fortunate to have Jason Caughey of the Fire Services Training School teach a customized course for two days each month for four months – a total of 64 hours. I had a difficult job convincing our firefighters to sign up for the course, but once they attended the first session, they were extremely enthusiastic. I had several tell me how well taught it was and how much they learned. All ten finished and are now not only much better prepared to fight wildland fires, but they also have the knowledge to fight structure fires, something we could not do previously. Even more important, these firefighters now act as a unit, making them safer and more efficient, and they are actively seeking other training sessions. This training, together with a grant for PPE and SCBA, has effectively prepared our firefighters to better protect the people and property of our 112 square mile district.

It is essential that the Fire Services Training School be funded to provide as much training as possible. For the vast majority of Montana fire entities, the quality training that Fire Services Training School provides makes the difference between hoping to avert a tragedy and serving their community with confidence and skill.

Sincerely,



Mary L. Messina, Secretary / Treasurer  
Heath Rural Fire District Board of Trustees